IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently amended) A computer implemented method for correcting a path sequence of an environment variable in a data processing system, the path sequence specifying an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system, the method comprising:

monitoring the data processing system for a change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable, wherein the environment variable is enabled and being used by the data processing system to specify the order for searching the plurality of different directories within the data processing system;

responsive to detection of the change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable, determining whether any duplicate files exist in any of the directories identified by the path sequence; and

responsive to determining that duplicate files do exist, altering the path sequence of the environment variable to ensure that a proper executable file is found and used executed when selected by one of a user and a running application program; and

after altering the path sequence, using the altered path sequence to find and execute the proper executable file.

2-5.   (Cancelled)

6.   (Currently amended) The computer implemented method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of altering the path sequence of the environment variable comprises removing references to all but one of duplicate files in the path sequence of the environment variable.

7.   (Currently amended) The computer implemented method as recited in claim 6, wherein the all but one duplicate file is selected by a user.

8.   (Cancelled)

9.   (Currently amended) A computer implemented method for correcting modifications that have been made to an environment variable during installation of software in a data processing system having a file system for storing files, the method comprising:

installing the software on the data processing system for subsequent execution by the data processing system, wherein installing the software comprises adding at least one directory name to a path sequence of an environment variable, the path sequence specifying an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system;

detecting that an the environment variable has been modified during the installing step;

responsive to the detecting step, determining if duplicate files exist in a the path sequence of the modified environment variable;

responsive to a determination that duplicate files exist in a the path sequence of the environment variable, prompting a user to select a correct one of the duplicate files; and

removing all incorrect ones of the duplicate files from that exist in the path sequence of the environment variable.

10.   (Currently amended) A computer program product tangibly-embodied in a tangible computer readable media for use in a data processing system for correcting a path sequence of an environment variable in the data processing system, the path sequence specifying an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system, the computer program product comprising:

first instructions for monitoring the data processing system for a change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable, wherein the environment variable is enabled and being used by the data processing system to specify the order for searching the plurality of different directories within the data processing system;

second instructions, responsive to detection of the change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable, for determining whether any duplicate files exist in any of the directories identified by the path sequence; and

third instructions, responsive to determining that duplicate files do exist, for altering the path sequence of the environment variable to ensure that a proper executable file is found and used executed when selected by one of a user and a running application program; and

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fourth instructions, responsive to altering the path sequence, for using the altered path sequence to find and execute the proper executable file.

11-14. (Cancelled)

15.   (Previously presented) The computer program product as recited in claim 10, wherein the step of altering the path sequence of the environment variable comprises removing references to all but one of duplicate files in the path sequence of the environment variable.

16.   (Original) The computer program product as recited in claim 15, wherein the all but one duplicate file is selected by a user.

17.   (Currently amended) A system for correcting a path sequence of an environment variable in a hardware data processing system, the path sequence specifying an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system, the system comprising:
        first means for monitoring the hardware data processing system for a change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable, wherein the environment variable is enabled and being used by the hardware data processing system to specify the order for searching the plurality of different directories within the hardware data processing system;
        second means, responsive to detection of the change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable, for determining whether any duplicate files exist in any of the directories identified by the path sequence; and
        third means, responsive to determining that duplicate files do exist, for altering the path sequence of the environment variable to ensure that a proper executable file is found and used executed when selected by one of a user and a running application program; and
        fourth means, responsive to altering the path sequence, for using the altered path sequence to find and execute the proper executable file.

18-21. (Cancelled)

22.   (Previously presented) The system as recited in claim 17, wherein the step of altering the path sequence of the environment variable comprises removing references to all but one of duplicate files in the path sequence of the environment variable.

23.   (Original) The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the all but one duplicate file is selected by a user.

24.   (Currently amended) A computer implemented method for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising data processing system implemented steps of:

    automatically invoking an environment variable manager upon occurrence of at least one of occurring events: a) a directory is deleted; b) a product is uninstalled on the data processing system; and c) a given environment variable is manually modified by a user;

    determining, by the environment variable manager, if any occurring event a), b) or c) causes a modification to an affected path sequence of any presently active environment variable, the path sequence specifying an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system; and

    automatically correcting the affected path sequence if it is determined that the occurring event causes the modification.

25.   (Currently amended) A computer implemented method for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising data processing system implemented steps of:

    automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever a path sequence for a presently active environment variable is modified in the data processing system, wherein the path sequence specifies an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system;

    determining, by the environment variable manager, if duplicate files exist in the directories specified by the path sequence of the environment variable; and

    enabling a display of each environment variable determined to have duplicate files in the directories specified by the path sequence to a user for correction.

26.   (Currently amended) A computer implemented method for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising data processing system implemented steps of:

determining if a directory, specified by a path sequence of any environment variable, is deleted from a file system of the data processing system, wherein the path sequence specifies an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system; and

enabling at least one of the following: a) an automatic deletion of the directory from the path sequence of the environment variable; and b) a display of an interface to inform the user to delete the directory from the path sequence of any affected environment variables; and

after the enabling step, searching directories in the file system as specified by the plurality of different directories in the path sequence to locate the executable code.

27.   (Currently amended) A data processing system, including hardware components, having means for managing environment variables, comprising:

means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager upon occurrence of at least one of occurring events: a) a directory is deleted; b) a product is uninstalled on the data processing system; and c) a given environment variable is manually modified by a user;

means for determining, by the environment variable manager, if any occurring event a), b) or c) causes a modification to an affected path sequence of any presently active environment variable, the path sequence specifying an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system; and

means for automatically correcting the affected path sequence if it is determined that the occurring event causes the modification.

28.   (Currently amended) A data processing system, including hardware components, having means for managing environment variables, comprising:

means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever a path sequence for a presently active environment variable is modified in the data processing system, wherein the path sequence specifies an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system;

means for determining, by the environment variable manager, if duplicate files exist in the directories specified by the path sequence of the environment variable; and

means for enabling a display of each environment variable determined to have duplicate files in the directories specified by the path sequence to a user for correction.

29.   (Currently amended) A data processing system, including hardware components, having means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

means for determining if a directory, specified by a path sequence of any environment variable, is deleted, wherein the path sequence specifies an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system; and

means for enabling at least one of a) an automatic deletion of the directory from the path sequence of the environment variable; and b) a display of an interface to inform the user to delete the directory from the path sequence of any affected environment variables; and

means for searching, responsive to the means for enabling, directories in the file system as specified by the plurality of different directories in the path sequence to locate the executable code.

30.   (Currently amended) A computer program tangibly-embodied on a tangible computer readable medium having program code means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

instruction means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager upon occurrence of at least one of occurring events: a) a directory is deleted; b) a product is uninstalled on the data processing system; and c) a given environment variable is manually modified by a user;

instruction means for determining, by the environment variable manager, if any occurring event a), b) or c) causes a modification to an affected path sequence of any presently active environment variable, the path sequence specifying an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system; and

instruction means for automatically correcting the affected path sequence if it is determined that the occurring event causes the modification.

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31.   (Currently amended) A computer program tangibly-embodied on a tangible computer readable medium having program code means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

  instruction means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever a path sequence for a presently active environment variable is modified in the data processing system, wherein the path sequence specifies an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system;

  instruction means for determining, by the environment variable manager, if duplicate files exist in the directories specified by the path sequence of the environment variable; and

  instruction means for enabling a display of each environment variable determined to have duplicate files in the directories specified by the path sequence to a user for correction.

32.   (Currently amended) A computer program tangibly-embodied on a tangible computer readable medium having program code means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

  instruction means for determining if a directory, specified by a path sequence of any environment variable, is deleted, wherein the path sequence specifies an order for searching a plurality of different directories for locating executable code within the data processing system; and

  instruction means for enabling at least one of the following a) an automatic deletion of the directory from the path sequence of the environment variable; and b) a display of an interface to inform the user to delete the directory from the path sequence of any affected environment variables; and

  means for searching, responsive to the means for enabling, directories in the file system as specified by the plurality of different directories in the path sequence to locate the executable code.